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Latin America in The World of Tomorrow

The workers south of the Rio Grande have a paramount interest in the principles of an international political order, based on individual liberties, on social justice and on the progress of all peoples, says the president of the Latin American Labor Federation.



VICENTE LOMBARDO TOLEDANO

By Vicente Lombardo Toledano

THIS is perhaps the most important meeting of the International Labor Conference, for in the gravest crisis in mankind's history it looks to the future as no other gathering has done.

Therefore, the decisions of this Conference must take their inspiration not only from the experience of the last quarter century, but also from the pressing needs of all the men and all the peoples of the world.

We know well that there are not and cannot be uniform solutions for the problems of all countries, because not all have reached the same level of economic and political development; but we hold forth the hope that there shall be for all, minimum guarantees for their material and social progress, which will constitute the historical outline of the postwar, broadening and enriching the democratic way of life as the universal form of government.

What Latin America Aspires To

The workers of Mexico and of the other Latin American countries, have a paramount interest in the principles of an international political order based on individual liberties, on social justice and on the progress of all peoples, because without these norms as a basis for the future world no one can aspire, as a person or as a nation, to solve his own most important problems satisfactorily. But since we are convinced that these universal norms have not only already been formulated, but will be lived up to, we wish to use the forum of this important gathering to explain, in the most schematic manner, the desires and the demands of the Latin American

workers, and also the demands and the desires of our peoples, because for us, more than ever before, the interests of the working class are intimately linked to the interests of the other social groups of our countries, to such a degree that for us there exists no difference between the solutions for the workers' problems and the solutions for the problems of our nations as a whole.

It is for this reason that we speak, thinking only of the great unsolved problems of our fatherlands; thinking exclusively of the progress of our peoples as indivisible entities; of the future of the new generations of Latin America, and of the complete realization of the ideals which inspired the founding fathers who won the independence of our nations.

We do not aspire to anything extraordinary, to anything new, nor to anything approaching the establishment of Utopia. We wish nothing more than to emerge from the historically backward period in which we live and to become a part of modern society to enjoy the benefits of civilization, within a plan of continental and world harmony, in accord with the principles of the Atlantic Charter which synthesizes the ideals which have inspired the struggle of our peoples for their economic and cultural well-being and for the emancipation of their countries.

We wholeheartedly subscribe to the proposals concerning the reorganization of international economic policy and the social norms for the establishment of peace, which the International Labor Office has drafted for this Conference. "To propose a better world order directed toward the realization of the social objectives which the United Nations have proclaimed in the Atlantic Charter," says the International Labor

Office, is the supreme objective of this assembly. And so it should be. That is why we offer for the consideration of the government, employer and workers delegates who make up the Conference, the following proposals and suggestions, so that the resolutions may take into account the special interests of the economically less developed countries, for without concrete recommendations in regard to the method of aiding these countries, suggestions of a general nature will produce no tangible benefits for the Latin American nations.

How Latin America Is Exploited

If up to today the populations of Latin America have not exercised their often universally proclaimed rights to material and moral progress, this is not due to their racial incapacity to attain the benefits of civilization and culture, nor to the adverse or difficult climate of their territory. It is, rather, due to the fact that Latin America is a congeries of semi-colonial countries, dependent on the big international monopolies, which exploit it as a zone for capital investment, a source of raw materials and of markets for manufactured products.

The big international monopolies have deformed the structure and the economic evolution of the Latin American countries, in such a manner that their peoples do not produce in accordance with their consumption needs, but in conformance to the exigencies of foreign industry.

The big international monopolies exploit the countries of Latin America through the following: (1) paying very low wages to the native workers; (2) paying very low taxes and tariffs to the national governments; (3) paying very low freight-rates to the transportation systems; (4) buying raw materials at very low prices, and (5) selling their manufactured products at very high prices.

How Progress Has Been Throttled

The big international monopolies have blocked the economic development of the Latin American countries, by means of the following mechanisms: (1) preserving the latifundia system of agricultural production; (2) obstructing the progress of industry, especially inter-Latin American trade; (3) supporting the native reactionary forces; (4) displacing native industrialists; (5) fighting against the peasant and labor movements; (6) provoking conflicts between the Latin American countries.

The economic, social and political backwardness in which the exploitation of the big international monopolies keep the countries of Latin America, is responsible for the fact that large sections of the Latin American population live in the most dramatic conditions of misery, ignorance, ill-health, lacking political liberties and economic security.

This has been our bitter history. We face a new future, full of promise. We base our hopes on



SOUTH AMERICA AND SOME OF ITS PRODUCTS

the splendid fruits of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy, which has opened a new era in the history of inter-American relations, and on the profound significance of this war which is being heroically waged by almost all the peoples of the world, in order to guarantee to all the right to work, the right to justice, the right to culture and the right to peace. Facing this future, we Latin American workers believe that in order for our countries to share in the fruits of the victory over fascism, it is necessary that some changes be made in international and national economic relations, in accord with the following principles:

A.—The investment of foreign capital in the less developed countries must subject themselves to tripartite government-employer-worker control, in order to guarantee: (1) the allocation of the capital in projects fundamental to the interests of the nation; (2) just payment of taxes, freight-rates and tariffs; (3) its coordination with native capital; (4) the conservation of natural resources; (5) the reinvestment of profits; (6) just collective bargaining agreements; (7) the reaping of legitimate profits on the invested capital.

B.—Trade and commerce must subject themselves to the following conditions: (1) fair prices for the producers of export goods; (2) fair prices for the producers of import goods; (3) obligatory quotas of machinery and other investment goods, which the industrialized nations shall export to the less developed countries and (4) the stabilization of exchange rates in conformance with which all transactions must be carried out.

There is no doubt that it is not only for indisputable reasons of right to liberty, justice and progress, that the peoples of Latin America insist upon the principles set forth in the Atlantic Charter and the declarations of the most far-sighted leaders of the United Nations. They also proclaim and demand these principles because only a plan for continental and world economic coordination

which contemplates the development of the non-industrialized countries of the world, can prevent a grave postwar crisis in the great powers, with consequences easily imagined. Industry in some countries has reached an amazing level of progress which produced a relatively high standard of living for their great popular masses; nevertheless, it is in these nations that the periodic crises have brought the greatest upheavals and internal maladjustments. On the other hand, the larger part of the inhabitants of the earth still live in a tremendously backward epoch, enduring a permanent social and material crisis. It is beyond doubt that if the standard of living of these people were to be raised, transforming their primitive agriculture into a modern industry and establishing the bases for a national industry which would satisfy the primary popular needs, the selling capacity of the great industrialized countries without harm to the progress of the less industrialized countries. To guarantee this desideratum, within the transition period of the postwar, a plan of economic coordination for each region and between and among the various regions of the world, is imperative.

Back War Aims to the Hilt

We hope that these words of ours, inspired by the since aim of contributing to make the coming peace stable and enduring, will be received by the government and employer delegates as the opinion of an important sector of the workers of the world, committed to the most constructive and important task of our time.

The workers of Latin America, who have contributed to the full measure of their capacity to the war effort of the United Nations, will work with all their might for the progress of the world of tomorrow.

Speech of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, labor delegate from Mexico, delivered in the plenary session of the 25th session of the International Labor Conference.